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Israel Pavilion brings new features to Heritage Festival

Thanks to a Government of Alberta grant, visitors to this year's Israel Pavilion at Heritage Festival will learn about the country through hands-on experiences.

The Jewish Federation of Edmonton received over \$20,000 from the Alberta Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grant Program. The program is intended to support community initiatives to increase cultural and cross-cultural awareness, and to educate Albertans to prevent and address racism.

One of the new exhibits is an archaeological dig where visitors will be searching through layers of sand to discover objects from Israel's past. Participants may receive prizes if they find enough objects.

Another new feature that the grant is supporting is an immersive experience that showcases Israel's technological innovations. Visitors will be invited to wear a virtual reality headset to explore 3D models of technology made by Israeli companies.

Vish will be on-site preparing the pavilion's food. The menu includes falafel or vegan shawarma pita pockets, Israeli salad, malabi (a vegan pudding), and a hummus bowl.



Volunteers work on building the structure that will hold the archaeological dig. Once completed, it will be filled with sand and items representing historical pieces from Israel's past.

The Israel Pavilion will be open on Sunday, August 6 and Monday, August 7. Heritage Festival is celebrating its 50th year but is in a new location due to the three-year closure of Hawrelak Park. The festival will be hosted in the Edmonton Exhibition Lands and Borden Park. The Israel Pavilion is located in the racetrack infield.



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FROM THE DESK OF

STACEY LEAVITT- WRIGHT CEO



Imagine a room brimming with the energy of 32 adults ranging in age from 20 to 35, some new to the city, others having returned after university or living here their whole life, looking to reconnect with the Jewish community and meet new people. Among them are two emissaries from the Jewish Agency for Israel, holding space for their questions and concerns about Israel, our Jewish homeland.

It is no stretch of the imagination. This event actually took place in June with the new young adult cohort we have established this year, called Genesis. We eagerly anticipate more events, volunteer opportunities, and engagement of these young adults. With the newly launched microgrants program, we can foster connections in ways most meaningful to them and continue to reach out to unaffiliated Jews in Edmonton.

In February 2021, we set out to ask the community a few questions; what was top of mind? What was important to you, and how should the Jewish Federation of Edmonton refocus as it emerged from the pandemic? Given our restricted capability and resources, where should we centre our efforts?

The strategic plan identified both capacity and content

priorities. Building the capacity of staff and volunteer talent has allowed us to expand our reach and build upon the foundations of successful programs and events that we have supported for many years. Genesis is one example; Holocaust Education is another, where we are now offering a program to junior high schools. We are further developing relationships with the Edmonton Public School Board and the Edmonton Public Library to ensure that awareness and education have a broad reach. The award-winning Shine A Light on Antisemitism mosaic will tour city schools with a teacher resource guide (generated by staff and a teacher advisory board) once it has completed the library tour.

One of the principal aims of our strategic plan, revealed in December 2021, is to engage with unaffiliated groups who are not yet part of the community. Shalom Baby is in its second year and Genesis is growing. We have connected and supported many young adults and families with each other, synagogues and Talmud Torah school. As a professional who got her start in community volunteering, it gives me great pleasure to welcome so many new volunteers to events and programs.

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Jewish Federation
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Establishing a leadership pipeline is another priority of our strategic plan, while engaging seasoned volunteers who can mentor newer ones. We are seeing this both at our board and subcommittees, and look forward to instituting a leadership program for people across our community later this year.

The strategic plan survey revealed that we needed to work on communications. We have been establishing a strong and diverse communication strategy, with a sophisticated approach to telling the Federation story across all platforms. This has been a key area of focus that we are continuously building and improving upon. We have enhanced connections with the media and elected officials across all levels of government, ensuring the Jewish Federation of Edmonton is seen as a trusted partner and resource on local issues of concern to the community.

Providing opportunities for community members to take part in advocacy is an area we have been addressing and I am excited about traveling with many of you to the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs' Face It, Fight It conference in Ottawa this October. If you are concerned about antisemitism in Canada, this is your opportunity to be more informed and to act alongside hundreds of others from across Canada. Please contact Jacqueline or myself to find out more about the conference and what subsidies may be available for you to attend.

Of the many questions our strategic plan set out to

answer, the one capacity priority I am asked about frequently is facility. Will we have a community gathering place, and what are the plans for the Federation offices? Now that we are at the midway point of the implementation of the strategic plan, we are taking measured steps towards establishing a facility plan by the end of the three years.

While in its early stages, the board has established a facility and space committee, chaired by Karen Leibovici. This committee has been tasked with finding an actionable recommendation to bring to the board that will meet the space needs of the community. This new group has been meeting regularly this spring to review prior considerations and consider and explore potential options. We are eagerly anticipating to informing you about their progress once their work has advanced further.

The Torah emphasizes the importance of leadership grounded in humility, honouring established leadership structures, and promoting unity. When personal agendas overshadow the greater good, it disrupts the harmony we seek within a community.

True to our values, I endeavour to work with each of you, with grace and humility, in a transparent, accountable, and collaborative manner for the betterment of our community. It is a privilege to work with passionate volunteers and committed colleagues from across Jewish Edmonton to ensure a strong and thriving Federation and community.

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Editor: Tammy Vineberg

Stories are valuable for teaching about the Holocaust



Chris Johnston

Having his high school students attend the annual Dianne and Irving Kipnes Holocaust Education Symposium is a field trip experience like no other for Chris Johnston.

Chris, who teaches social studies at Ross Shepherd High School, has been bringing students to the symposium for over 20 years, including the time he worked at Victoria School of the Arts. This year's symposium hosted Holocaust survivor Marie Doduck, who managed to survive on the streets starting at the age of five.

His first experience with the symposium involved a discussion about Jim Keegstra, the former mayor of Eckville, Alberta, who publicly denied that the Holocaust happened. He was a high school teacher who taught antisemitic ideas to his students in the 1980s.

Chris says he looks at his role as a history guide and was prompted to first take his students to the symposium so they could see history first hand. "Students need to know the good, bad, and all parts of history. The Holocaust is such a significant, impactful

event in humanity that I think it's always valuable for the kids to experience survivors," he adds.

With each symposium brings a new experience for him, especially hearing Marie's story. "I've never met what was referred to as a street survivor before in my life. I thought it was fascinating," says Chris.

Before he brings his students to a symposium, Chris informs them that this will be one of the most valuable and memorable experiences in high school. Following the field trip, his class has an in-depth conversation where students share how they feel and what they learned. "They basically sit in disbelief thinking that this can happen. I get kids crying in my room because they don't understand this master race silliness," he says.

He is thankful that the Jewish Federation of Edmonton provides this opportunity to teachers and their students since it takes learning out of the textbook and provides real life context.

"Any time you have an opportunity to have a first-person account of historical events is super valuable. It's fantastic and necessary for the kids to see Holocaust survivors and ask them questions. As far as in an immediate emotional connection and impact, I would say the symposiums have been the most important field trip that I've taken the kids to," says Chris.

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Student gains insight from Holocaust Symposium



Carter Collier

Before attending the Dianne and Irving Kipnes Holocaust Education Symposium in May, Carter Collier didn't realize the magnitude of antisemitism that still prevails to this day. Carter, a Grade 11 student from Lillian Osborne High School, was familiar with Jewish holidays but not much more than that.

He decided to go on this optional half day field trip because he thought it would be an incredible experience. "I felt it would be really important to actually listen to a Holocaust survivor. The more time passes, the fewer survivors there are," says Carter.

This year's symposium saw over 500 students attend from three different high schools over two days at the Stanley A. Milner Library. They heard from Yoni Berrous, head of Canadian educational programs at Yad Vashem—The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, and Holocaust survivor Marie Doduck, who wrote her memoir, *A Childhood Unspoken*, as part of the Azrieli Foundation's Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program. All

students attending the symposium received a copy of the book from the Azrieli Foundation.

Carter is taking a social studies class this semester and his teacher delved into World War II and the Holocaust as part of the war crimes unit. "We learned extensively about the atrocities that the Nazis committed," he says.

He only was familiar with a genocide against the Jewish people before this class. "I knew who the Nazis were but I didn't understand the depth and maybe even not the gravity. When you actually see the statistics, it's mind boggling. After hearing a survivor speak and seeing the statistics, it has a lot more impact," adds Carter.

For Carter, hearing Marie's story was a bit of shock to his system. Marie spent most of World War II as a child hiding from the Nazis and took on different identities. He says all high school students should take advantage of this field trip.

"You learn a lot and it's an opportunity that isn't going to be available in the future. We are the last generation who will hear these Holocaust survivors speak. Marie said, 'You are the witness,'" says Carter.

Mosaic project wins five communication awards

A mosaic project that focuses on antisemitism awareness has garnered local and national attention. The Shine a Light on Antisemitism mosaic won four awards from the International Business Communicators Capital Awards from the Edmonton chapter and one Award of Excellence from the Canadian Public Relations Society.

These awards stem from the first phase of the project - when the mosaic was created, the virtual reality exhibit on the Jewish Federation of Edmonton's website, and the livestream of the unveiling.

The mosaic has been on tour since November 2022, thanks to two grants. One grant from the City of Edmonton has facilitated the mosaic to be displayed at five Edmonton Public Library branches.

The city's Community Safety and Well-Being grant will also support the art piece touring Edmonton Public

School Board high schools starting in the fall of 2023. The Federation is developing a toolkit to accompany the mosaic so teachers will have resources on how to discuss antisemitism while using the mosaic as a prompt.



The Shine a Light on Antisemitism mosaic is on display at the Edmonton Public Library Meadows branch until August 14. In front of the mosaic are four local communications awards that the Federation received for the project. Not pictured is the national award.

Film award prize helps student with future education



David Ivanchikov

Thanks to the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, David Ivanchikov will be exploring the world of filmmaking as he heads to Concordia University in Montreal to study fine arts, this fall. David is the winner of the 2023 Earl Parker Award for Jewish Film.

He heard about the award in a Hillel Edmonton post on Instagram. He had been

enrolled in Open Studies at the University of Alberta and was seeking financial support for his goal to obtain a fine arts degree.

The purpose of the Earl Parker Award is to promote the development of Jewish film. The prize can be used to finance a course of study in film or video production.

David has had a life-long passion for fine arts but had never made a film before he made the video he submitted as part of his award application. He was homeschooled his entire life and began taking art classes at age three. David spent much of his childhood exploring the vast, diverse, and natural

landscapes of western Canada. Recently, David has become interested in exploring emotional themes through the use of more diverse mediums, such as film or music.

His video was a school project for his Eastern religion class, and it focused on comparing the Jewish pressure to achieve, to the Buddhist ideal of aimlessness. Video footage, taken on his phone, illustrated David's everyday life, with scenes such as bus stops and landscapes. "The first half of the video was me talking about my current experience and the second half I talked about Buddhist traditions," he says.

David has painted for most of his life and hopes to become more involved with film this year by joining a university club. "I know I don't plan to stop making films and I would love to put a project together, possibly with help from a few artists. I want to create a film exploring my experiences in Montreal or about its Jewish community," he says.

The \$1,500 award will be used towards David's tuition at Concordia and he's very grateful to the Edmonton community. "It was great to know that the Jewish community is here to support me. Every single penny counts right now with my education," says David.

Genesis Edmonton connecting Jewish young adults

Young adults in Jewish Edmonton are finding each other through events that Genesis Edmonton is hosting. The Jewish Federation of Edmonton revived the program after its strategic plan revealed the need to engage young adults.

Jacqueline Medalye was hired in November as the associate director of next generation leadership and advocacy. She started with an email list of 25 people and it's now grown to 100 people.

"We keep finding new young adults at each event. They are interested in connecting with people their age and with our Jewish community," says Jacqueline.

Some of the past events include Drinks and Dreidels, collecting donations for the houseless, and meeting at the 124 Street Grand Market for poutine from Veggie Delights food truck.

A barbecue is being organized for Wednesday, August

30 at 6:30 p.m. at Sir Wilfrid Laurier Park. More details will be coming soon. The Genesis committee has expanded to two co-chairs and two members who are planning the remainder of the events for this year.



Melissa Benjamin (left) and Davina Eisenstat meet during Poutine Palooza, one of the events that Genesis Edmonton has held over the last six months.

Israeli emissaries get a taste of Edmonton

Two Israelis got their first taste of Canada in early June. Lilach Bauer, 33, and Gilad Inbar, 27, came to Edmonton as part of the Jewish Agency for Israel's small communities program. The emissaries also visited Winnipeg and Calgary. They spent a few days in each city, learning about Canadian Jewish experiences and engaging with the communities.

While they were in Edmonton, they formed relationships with several local Jewish organizations. Genesis and Hillel welcomed Lilach and Gilad on Thursday night. They attended Shabbat programs with Talmud Torah, PJ Library, Beth Shalom, and Temple Beth Ora throughout Friday and Saturday.



Edmonton hosted two Israeli emissaries in June. Gilad Inbar and Lilach Bauer participated in programs with Talmud Torah School, PJ Library, Beth Shalom Synagogue and Temple Beth Ora.

Lilach and Gilad expressed how grateful they are about Israel as their native country. They shared their rich family lineage in an interview with the Jewish Federation. Gilad said his family has been living in Israel for many generations, while Lilach's family came from all over the world after the Holocaust. "Israel is home to all the Jews in the world. You have two homes, one in Canada and one in Israel. It's a safe place for all," said Gilad.

One goal of their visit was to allow the Edmonton Jewish community to understand Israel from the inside, as their country can be negatively portrayed on social media. They said that an internal perspective can help interpret Israeli headlines in the media. By explaining their life experiences, Lilach and Gilad could help educate Jewish Edmonton and share Israeli culture.

As they met members from the community, it fascinated the emissaries to learn how Jewish life in Canada differs from Israel. Gilad's intention was to come to Canada to express his Israeli story and understand the lives of Edmontonians. "It's the connection between us that brings the spirit of Israel to here," says Gilad.

"Most Israelis inside of Israel don't have antisemitic issues. However, they have different issues. These can include protecting our Israeli and Jewish values worldwide," adds Lilach. Gilad and Lilach say they feel connected to Jews in Edmonton through their Jewish identity.

They found Canadians to be very welcoming and our country to have wide open spaces. "People are kind and relaxed, and there is a lot of land. It's not like this in Israel. I like it all green and the lakes," says Gilad.

Lilach and Gilad left for Calgary on Sunday, June 4, hoping to visit Canada again and re-engage with Jewish Edmonton.

The Small Communities program is a partnership between the Jewish Agency, Jewish Federations across Canada, and Israel's Ministry of Diaspora.

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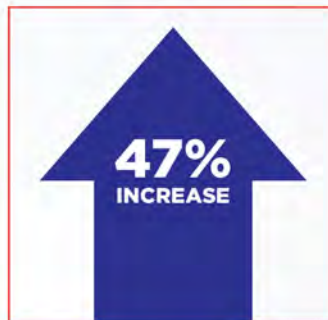
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Volunteering for casinos is very rewarding

Many organizations in the Edmonton Jewish community depend on casino volunteers annually. Casinos help raise between \$70,000 and \$80,000 in a two-day period. Jodi Zabłudowski has been volunteering at casino nights for over 30 years—since before computers could count money.

“Organizations wouldn’t survive without having a casino. Casinos keep the community going. It takes lots of volunteers, but it’s well worth the time and effort,” she adds.

The Jewish Federation of Edmonton has scheduled the JCC casino for November 19 and 20. Organizer Rebecca Asbell explained that the two days of volunteerism generates over \$75,000. Without these casino nights and the volunteers, the Federation could not provide all of its services and programs for the community.

Alberta has a unique charitable gaming model. It is the only province in Canada where charitable organizations are licensed to conduct and manage casino events. Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis distributes the revenue to the casino, government, and non-profit organizations. For every dollar in revenue, non-profits receive 15 cents. The 15 cents are divided between a variety of local charities and non-profits, like the Federation.

In return, casinos require volunteers for day and night shifts. They require each organization involved to recruit around 40 volunteers for two days of work. The casino requires volunteers to work as chip runners, count room personnel, cashiers, bankers, and managers. Volunteers can donate their time by filling any of the positions. Each of the five roles contributes in various ways and suits people differently. Those who enjoy movement may prefer to be chip runners. Regardless of preferences, all roles are vital to running a successful casino night.

Rebecca has been volunteering at casino nights for over 20 years. She estimates that one shift is worth around \$2,000. She says that volunteering is a great opportunity for people, who don’t have the financial resources, to



Jodi Zabłudowski is an active volunteer in the Edmonton Jewish community. One of the roles she regularly helps with is casinos.

donate money to give back to the community.

“Although I give financially to the Federation, there is nothing more valuable than time. As a person who is a giver, this is such a meaningful way to give time and know that it equates to money,” says Rebecca.

Jodi recommends that first-time volunteers be counters or chip runners, since those are the easiest roles. She volunteers at casino nights after all these years because not only is there a need for it but also the satisfaction and camaraderie are very rewarding. She said that volunteering is a chance to make friendships throughout the entire experience and a bonus is a complimentary meal and snacks.

“It’s usually the same group of people who volunteer for the casinos. The challenge for the community and not just Federation, but all the Jewish organizations, is to get the young people, the next generation, involved. The ones in their 20s, 30s and 40s need to volunteer at a casino so that they can carry on the tradition,” says Jodi.

To sign up to volunteer, please visit volunteersignup.org/XYQP.

“The challenge for the community and not just Federation, but all the Jewish organizations, is to get the young people, the next generation, involved.”

- Jodi Zabłudowski

Scholarship makes a difference on student's life

A 23-year-old psychology student, who was awarded a Jewish Studies scholarship, has already seen the impact it has made on her life. Victoria Taylor received the 2023 Jewish Federation of Edmonton Scholarship. The \$1,000 scholarship is given to a student in Jewish Studies with an outstanding academic achievement.

As someone who handles her own finances, the scholarship has massively affected Victoria. The scholarship allowed Victoria to work fewer hours and focus on her studies more. This helped her do better in school, leading to more scholarship opportunities in the future. She said it was such a relief to receive this scholarship.

"I'm so grateful. It helps put me through school. The scholarship paid for around half of my semester. It was a tremendous help," she says.

Victoria shared the importance of Jewish Studies as a non-Jewish person, and why it's interesting to her. She stressed the need for representation of all cultures in academia, especially Judaism, which encourages academics. "At least in psychology, it's interesting to see how most of the big thinkers were Jewish. From an outside perspective, it appears to be a culture that really encourages questioning and development of the mind," she says.

Despite being outside of the Jewish community, Victoria has noticed an increase in antisemitism recently. She believes that the lack of Jewish representation and COVID-19 conspiracy theories have caused the increase in Alberta. She

grew up in a predominantly Christian conservative town near Red Deer and said that Jewish people were often the first ones to blame in conspiracy theories.

"The world is a scary place right now; it requires less energy to blame a group of people for your problems. If we're fighting against each other, then we are not looking to see what the real problem is," says Victoria. Her experience at the University of Alberta campus is much less severe. According to her, educated students believe in fewer antisemitic conspiracy theories.

Although Victoria grew up in a town with limited worldviews, her parents did a great job exposing her to different cultures and perspectives. She can attribute some of her interest in Judaism to her parents.

"My parents tried to educate me about other cultures. Sometimes we would go to Sikh temples for food and celebrations. During Chanukah, we would read Chanukah story books and eat latkes. It was always important to my parents and led to many fun times," adds Victoria.

Victoria looks forward to learning more about Judaism and other cultures throughout the rest of her studies, as she continues her journey to become a therapist.



Victoria Taylor



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